

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. A method for a network device to negotiate a common mode of  
2 communication between two nodes, comprising:  
3 a) establishing a first communication path between the network device and a first node;  
4 b) establishing a second communication path between the network device and a second  
5 node;  
6 c) establishing a third communication path through the network device, the third  
7 communication path coupling the first and second communication paths to provide a  
8 common mode of operation between the first node and the second node.

1 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the network device is a probe and establishing  
2 the third communication path through the network device establishes a point to point link  
3 between the first and the second nodes.

1 3. The method of claim 1, wherein establishing the first communication path  
2 between the network device and the first node comprises negotiating a mode of operation  
3 with the first node.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein negotiating a mode of operation with the first  
2 node comprises negotiating a speed of a transmission of data over the first  
3 communication path between the network device and the first node.

1 5. The method of claim 3, wherein negotiating a mode of operation with the first  
2 node comprises negotiating one of half duplex and full duplex communication over the  
3 first communication path between the network device and the first node.







